

PRIMITIVE

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE



VOL II No. 5

JUNE ISSUE

AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP
MARGOT MAYO
LEADER



"PROMENADE"

Official organ of the American Square Dance Group.

"The purpose of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with all who entertain similar views."

"A.S.D.G. Constitution
"Promenade" is published monthly,
with one special summer edition.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-chief.....Margot Mayo
Circulation Manager..Alan Swartz

SUBSCRIPTION

\$1.00.....yearly.
.15..single mailed copy.

HEADQUARTERS

52 East 13th Street

New York City

LOrraine 7 - 0174

Copyright, 1941, by American Square Dance Group.

SO LONG

The season is over for PROMENADE; although the American Square Dance Group will continue its activities for the summer, we will not bring out another issue of our magazine until the mid-summer.

In many ways this has been a wonderful winter for us, and we have enjoyed it tremendously. There have been unhappy times, and worried times along with the fun. We have learned a great deal about working together, about sharing our sorrows as well as our hobbies, and we feel that we have grown as individuals and as members of our Group. We have come nearer to living up to our ideals and now we know how to go ahead and really accomplish the aims of our organization.

I wish to thank all those members of the Group who have worked so hard on PROMENADE ... Alan, Boris, Pat T., Aileen, Manny and Chick of the adult Group...and Pat, Trucky, Vita, Sonny, Danny, Pooh and Judy of the Junior Group. They have worked, uncomplainingly, under very difficult conditions, and they, and the others who have done occasional work, deserve all the credit and thanks that I can offer. If I have omitted anyone, I have not done so intentionally, and I should like to take this opportunity to try, at any rate, to express my gratitude to the whole Group, and to our friends for standing by me this winter.

Then, there are the companies who have cooperated with us in sending books and records for review; there are the friends of the Group who have been kind enough to write special articles for us and to appear for us at our various parties. And there are those who have helped us by spreading the news about PROMENADE, magazines like RECREATION, YOUTH DIGEST, YANKEE, and the DAIRYMEN'S LEAGUE ... to name but a few....and our thanks to the NEW YORK TIMES.

It is seldom that the editorial "we" becomes the personal "I", but now, at the end of the season, I should like this page to express gratitude, enthusiasm and love to the American Square Dance Group, PROMENADE, and all our friends; and to say, along with Woodie Guthrie in his song, "So long, it's been good to know you."

Margot

DUTCH FOLK FESTIVAL IN MICHIGAN
R.B. Tefferteller
(Corresponding member)

The week of May 17th to 24th is the gayest time of the year for the little town of Holland, Michigan, population, 15,000, located on the shore of Lake Michigan. Residents of Holland get out their best Dutch costumes, clip their lawns and clean the streets, for it's Tulip Time up Holland way.

I visited Holland on Sunday along with over half a million other curious Americans from the middle west, and when I finally arrived at the Flemish designed hostelry, Warm Friend Tavern, with its greeting above the door, "Welkom Vreemdelingen" or "Welcome Stranger", I felt as if I never wanted to move through that heavy traffic again. Holland's Eighth Street in front of the "Warm Friend Tavern", had been scrubbed meticulously the day before the opening ceremonies as the Dutch were wont to do centuries ago in old Holland across the sea.

Out on the tulip farms I was left absolutely speechless. For once in my life I realized what a blessing we mortals have in being able to recognize such rich hues and colors as they spread like patchwork quilts of sheer beauty for the human eye to feast upon.

But I was interested in the dances, scheduled as a part of the Festival's activities, so I located Miss Mabel Apel, the young physical education director in the public school system, who had trained the dancers for this great affair. She had close to 300 girls from the 8th to the 12th grades. Half of these were dressed as boys, and all of them were dressed in the traditional costumes of the provinces of Volendam, Zeeland and Isle of Marken. The Volendam costumes were in the majority as shown by the peaked bonnets of the girls and the white socks and caps with small visors for the boys. All sorts of variations were to be found among these costumes, but another characteristic was quite noticeable, namely, lots of starched petticoats worn by the girls. Miss Apel said these costumes would almost stand alone in the evening when the dancers laid them aside for the day.

Two particularly interesting facts were noted. First, that Holland is a very religious community and dancing in any form is prohibited in the public schools. This is reflected in the manner in which the dancers turned each other in each dance, in an open rather than a closed position. Secondly, many figures similar to the American square dance patterns are used in the "Klomp" dances. The quadrille formation is most commonly used with four couples in each set.

During the street washing ceremony the "Scrubbers Dance" is performed by couples. Properties such as brooms and buckets are used by the dancers as they move about with a "Step, brush, hop" business. This is a step on the left foot, brushing the ground lightly with the right wooden shoe, then a hop on the left foot. These dancers become very adept with the cumbersome wooden shoe after much padding with a lot of socks.

When I left Holland and headed for Detroit, I left a bit of the old world behind and plunged into a new twentieth century city where men and women still hope for a better life tomorrow, and I left knowing full well that the boys and girls across the sea would not be able to laugh, sing and dance this spring.

BOOK REVIEWS

Irving

EARLY NEW ENGLAND PSALMODY

H.C. McDougall, author, Stephan Daye
Press. Brattleboro, Vt. price \$3.50

THREE CENTURIES OF AMERICAN HYMNODY

Henry Wilder Foote, author. Harvard Univ.
Press. Cambridge, Mass. Price \$4.00



Published simultaneously, though independently of each other, these two volumes hold an amazing affinity for each other, offering contrasts in points of view and compliment in historical continuity.

Arriving at a time when an interest in early Americana is steadily on the upgrade, these books are most welcome in establishing a homeground for American colonial thought as expressed in the church music of those times.

In spite of the forbidding titles, the importance of these works lies in their associations with the history of folk culture and however much the religious connections are stressed, the reader is always aware of the part folk songs played in shaping the growth of American psalmody and hymnody.

No attempt to write a history of American church music is made. Dr. Foote is concerned primarily with the text of the psalms and hymns, and with the thought expressed as a reflection of the ideas of the time. In his scholarly approach, covering three hundred years of development, he portrays the general movement in thought and sentiment in the 18th century, and traces the slow transition from psalmody to hymnody during the last half of that century. Dr. Foote has had to divide his story into studies of denominational groups, which distracts from the continuity. In a sweeping but comprehensive manner, he brings his work up to date noting the spirited and intelligent approach which stamps the music of the church today.

Dr. McDougall's book specializes in early colonial music, paying more attention to the individuals responsible for it; and like Dr. Foote, acknowledges the importance of the Protestant reformation in the European countries in influencing the music here. One is introduced to the "fuguing tunes", to the appearance of Boston singing schools and their revivals in later periods. Dr. McDougall's studies have carried him to the works of George Pullen Jackson, whose books are well known to all folklorists. Inherent in this book is the recognition given by many to the religious song as a type of folk song. Unfortunately, for lack of material, Dr. McDougall cannot argue against those who believe that the religious song is not a part of folklore at all, and he longs for courageous scholars to continue to uncover that rich field for research.

These two books should prove invaluable, not only to those concerned with the improvement of public worship, but to all students of American life, literature and folklore. Appendices and indices in both volumes add to their educational and cultural importance, and enough material is thus made available, for this reader at least, to launch a vast research project, which would prove not only enlightening, but enjoyable.

DIALS AND DISCS

Following our contention that interest in square dancing is growing, another album of square dances has been released by Decca. The music is provided by Al MacLeods Country Dance Band, the calls by Ed Durlacher. There are three records, twelve inches, allowing time for each couple to be active, as in real square dancing. Among the dances called are the following: "She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain", "Billy Boy", "The Grapevine Twist", "Dip and Dive", "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" and the "Cowboy's Dream".

There is a brochure, written by Margot Mayo, with descriptive directions for the dances, and after studying this booklet, the dances are simple to perform. The calls are clear and well timed and after you catch on to the calls, most of the records are fun to dance to. The music is pleasant, though one of the records, the "Cowboy's Dream", is almost too slow for comfort.

Members of the American Square Dance Group had great fun recently, when they went up to Decca's to make an album of "Running Set" records. They took off their shoes and danced during the recording. And tho' it was awfully hot, it was an experience for which they will always be grateful. Manny was in good form. Others will have as much fun dancing to these recordings as we had making them.



At the present moment, there are too few radio programs of authentic folk Americana. With the ending of the Leadbelly series over station WNYC, there remain but two programs of note. These are scheduled Saturday morning and afternoon on station WABC. Burl Ives presents folk songs from 11:45 to 12:00 noon and Eric Clark brings "real American folk songs and songs of the South" from 3:30 to 3:45.

... Jean

Of unusual interest is a folk program on Saturday nights at 12:00 midnite to 1:00 A.M. called "Grand old Opry". Quite difficult to get in New York City, this broadcast from Tennessee presents the finest array of square dance tunes we've heard yet.

NOTES OF INTEREST



In Michigan, a festival will be held treating one phase of American life which is entirely forgotten by most people. Paul Bunyan's favorite work---log birling. Out in Gladstone, Michigan, July 4th, 5th and 6th, there is going to be a rodeo and forest festival including a Paul Bunyan parade with wood-chopping and sawing contests. The rodeo is a modern version of log rolling or log birling. Under the auspices of the National Rodeo Association founded in 1926, log birling has developed into spectacular competition for both men and women. The essential principle is to keep the "cork" pine logs which are of a uniform size, spinning as the two combatants try to knock each other off into the water. But now that there prizes, the sport has become much more fancy. In 1938, one man turned cartwheels on the logs and finished standing up. Others can "walk the keg" The keg is a short log 2 yards long and one yard wide. The birler walks it, that is, he actually turns it over, end over end. The more spectacular and more modern contests include birling on rolling skates, skipping rope while birling, handstanding on a kitchen chair on a log and lying down on the back and getting up without falling off.

All those who birl must wear calked shoes. A new ruling was put up by the Association stating that all men contestants must wear lumberjack costumes with shirts. But the girl contestants may wear bathing suits.

There are many stories of Paul Bunyan and log birling. He is credited with founding the sport when he birlled against the Devil on the Columbia River. Needless to say, Paul Won.

Myrna

For the last few Sundays, there have been great doings at 70 East 12th Street, the studio of the Almanac Singers, Pete Bowers, Lee Hayes and Millard Lampell. These are no series of "concerts", but, which is more fun, "sings" with the Almanackers teaching and singing the "Songs for John Doe" (reviewed in the last issue of "Promenade") and other vigorous and timely songs as well as familiar old ballads. There are always guests there and one frequently runs into old favorites such as Leadbelly, Aunt Molly Jackson, Saul Aarons and Jim Garland.

For information, get in touch with Pete Bowers at 70 East 12th Street and be sure to go down for a 'sing' !.....
It's great fun !

Maizie, Jr. Group

Dont miss the article in the June Harper's Bazaar entitled "I Hear America Singing", by Chester Kallman. It lists the records of particular interest to folklorists and has pictures of such beloved folk singers as Woodie Guthrie, Frank Luther, John Niles, Leadbelly, Carl Sandburg and others.

NOTES OF INTEREST

2

On Wednesday evening June 4th at Town Hall, New York City, a program offering "Songs of the American People" was presented featuring the finest group of well known folk singers available.....Leadbelly, Joshua White, Burl Ives, John and Lucy Allison, the Almanac Singers, Tony Kraber, Earl Robinson, Aunt Molly Jackson, W.C. Handy, Harold Ambellan, Elsie Houston, Gerald Clark and the Calypso singers. Each of these contributed to the script by telling what he knew of the song or by answering simple questions such as "where did the blues come from?" by Leadbelly. This was an attempt to illustrate the various phases of American folk songs.



The production was pleasingly simple. The performers sat on the stage in ordinary straight back chairs and joined in on the choruses whenever they knew the songs. Lee Hayes did an excellent job as narrator delivering the commentary from the pulpit of stage left. The audience that filled the house responded with such friendly enthusiasm that they too came in on several refrains.

During the summer, the A.S.D.G. are holding their studio open for classes, parties, rehearsals, etc since many members will be in the City for continuation of Group Demonstrations. Our studio will again be at 52 East 13th Street. Those interested in joining us for the summer, kindly contact Margot Mayo, 585 West 214th Street, Manhattan.

For those who intend doing any reading or acquiring material on folk, social, modern, ballet, etc dancing, may we suggest that you visit Sally Kamin's bookshop, 15 West 56th Street, New York City. Here one may find one of the most complete collections of material on the various phases of dance, no less American square dancing. We would be grateful if you mention the fact that you saw their name in "Promenade"

WASHINGTON BRANCH

Our Washington branch of the A.S.D.G., under the direction of Arthur Lentz, is holding "open house" on Saturday evening June 21st on the YWCA roof at 17th and Kay Street N.W. Washington, D.C. Arthur certainly deserves a great deal of praise for his work in collecting folk material from the different parts of the country. Our thanks also go to Edna Crumpley of this branch of the A.S.D.G. for the song "Untrue Lover" in this issue.